

# NOAA Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program Accountability Policy (August 2015)

## INTRODUCTION

To improve the Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program's (DSCRTP) ability to track and demonstrate accountability for its spending, this document has been produced to communicate program policies and expectations to NOAA staff that are executing activities with DSCRTP funds. NOAA tracks its programs and budgets very closely, enforcing agency wide policies to demonstrate accountability to the Administration and Congress. The intent of this document is to clearly articulate expectations and increase communication among Principal Investigators and headquarters staff involved in fiscal year funding decisions, budgeting, and project tracking processes. Increased communication regarding a project's status should prevent issues from arising.

### About NOAA's Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program

In 2009, NOAA launched the Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program (DSCRTP) to provide scientific information needed to conserve and manage deep-sea coral ecosystems. The Program is authorized under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Sec. 408) and developed in consultation with the Regional Fishery Management Councils (Councils) and in coordination with other federal agencies and educational institutions.

The DSCRTP is administered by the NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation, Habitat Protection Division. Budget and policy recommendations are made by Division staff with final approval granted by the Director of the Office of Habitat Conservation. Activities are implemented across NOAA utilizing the capabilities of NOS, OAR, NESDIS and NMFS.

Coordination and collaboration is guided by the [NOAA Strategic Plan for Deep-Sea Coral and Sponge Ecosystems](#), and facilitated through bimonthly NOAA-wide Deep-Sea Coral Coordination meetings, the [NOAA Deep Sea Coral Data Portal](#), and a NOAA-internal email listserv. Contact Fan Tsao ([Fan.Tsao@noaa.gov](mailto:Fan.Tsao@noaa.gov)) to gain access to the password-protected portion of the Data Portal or be included in the email listserv.

The Program funds three-year fieldwork initiatives to research, map, and characterize deep-sea coral habitats in selected U.S. regions. In addition to these fieldwork, the DSCRTP funds targeted analyses (i.e., small projects) to fill short-term research needs and/or extract additional value from existing datasets. The Program releases an annual Request for Proposals open to all NOAA staff, to select small projects to fund in the following fiscal year.

Requirements and responsibilities are organized below by **annual small projects (section A)** and **three-year regional fieldwork (section B)**.

## A. REQUIREMENTS FOR DSC RTP SMALL PROJECTS

Small projects include targeted analyses to integrate existing research on—and known locations of—deep-sea corals; conducting workshops to further identify management-driven deep-sea coral exploration and research needs and to identify the minimum requirements to address deep-sea coral data and information management needs; analyzing the distribution and intensity of fishing practices that may impact these corals; and improving the reporting and analysis of bycatch of deep-sea corals caught in commercial fishing activities. Small projects often fill important information gaps for upcoming three-year, regional fieldwork or improve the utility of existing data sets. As such they are designed to be one-year projects and have some requirements that differ from the fieldwork.

The following are requirements of all Principal Investigators of small projects:

### Requirements for Annual Budget Execution

So that the DSC RTP can comply with NOAA's budget tracking and accountability requirements, we require that all small-project Principal Investigators receiving funds from the Program:

1. Provide the DSC RTP HQ staff with the necessary information in order to prepare Budget Operating Plan (BOP) memos, including the proper organization codes, principal investigator and budget officer contact information.
2. Submit BOP to the Principal Investigator's budget officer, so the officer may retrieve the funds within two weeks of receiving notice that the transfers are complete.
3. Contact the DSC RTP as soon as possible, if funds cannot be obligated in accordance with the monthly spend plans, to explain variances.
4. Execute 100% funds during the same fiscal year and for DSC RTP purposes. If unable to obligate funds for original, planned purposes, please contact the DSC RTP HQ staff to discuss how to return or reprogram the funds.
5. Should not use funds to support federal salaries.

### Requirements Regarding Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting

NOAA has existing requirements for submission and archiving of specific data sets and associated metadata. All Principal Investigators must ensure these NOAA requirements are met, data are submitted to appropriate national archives (NODC, NCDDC, NCDC, NGDC, NOAA Central Library), and provide documentation of this submission to the Program's data manager, Robert McGuinn ([Robert.McGuinn@noaa.gov](mailto:Robert.McGuinn@noaa.gov)). In addition:

1. Small projects that develop data on the locations of deep-sea corals or sponges must record these data and associated information in the format of the National Database for Deep-Sea Corals and Sponges, ensure that required fields are filled in, and submit this in Excel, Access or ArcGIS format to Robert McGuinn ([Robert.McGuinn@noaa.gov](mailto:Robert.McGuinn@noaa.gov)). Refer to the [template for database records](#).

2. Projects that develop information on the location of human activities that may impact deep-sea corals (e.g., fishing effort) should submit files in appropriate GIS formats to Robert McGuinn.
3. Any restrictions on data publication (e.g., legal restrictions on proprietary fishing data, observer locations, or requests for holds on data planned for publication) should be communicated to Robert McGuinn.

### Requirements for Reporting on Progress and Results

Demonstrating the impacts of Program investments is vital to the success and longevity of the DSC RTP. This cannot be achieved without the cooperation of the Principal Investigators and staff that implements the work the DSC RTP supports. Therefore, the DSC RTP requires that all Principal Investigators:

1. Report progress at least every six months on NOAA's Deep Sea Coral Data Portal (<https://deepseacoraldata.noaa.gov/other-studies>).
2. Credit the DSC RTP in all presentations, reports, and other publications on work that received financial support from the Program.
  - a. For photos: Credit "NOAA" and any other credits you wish to provide (e.g., the photographer, project manager, or office). NOAA and the DSC RTP retain the right to use photos, videos or figures developed under program-funded activities.
3. Submit copies of all reports and publications to the DSC RTP, by uploading them to the Data Portal and notifying the DSC RTP HQ staff.
4. Participate in NOAA's internal Deep-Sea Coral Coordination teleconference bimonthly, and present interim and final results when invited.
5. Within 18 months of receiving funds, provide (at a minimum) a synopsis of results of the project on the Data Portal.

## B. REQUIREMENTS FOR REGIONAL FIELDWORK TEAMS

To ensure the DSC RTP is having a targeted impact with its investments, the Program primarily supports multi-year fieldwork to research, map, and characterize deep-sea coral habitats in selected U.S. regions. The process for planning and implementing three-year fieldwork begins with a regional research priorities workshop, followed by convening a regional, cross-Line- Office fieldwork planning team that develops a three-year science plan. More information on the Program's [Regional Fieldwork Selection and Planning Guidelines](#) can be found on the Data Portal.

## Requirements for Regional Fieldwork Planning

Requirements of the regional fieldwork planning teams include:

1. Identifying a regional Fieldwork Team Lead. This individual must be a NOAA federal employee and is the single point of contact to DSCRTP HQ for ensuring coordination and communication of fieldwork status. This entails the preparation and submission of plans and deliverables to headquarters on an annual basis for the three-year efforts and requires the lead to provide regular updates on project status at six month intervals and upon completion of cruise activities components.
2. Ensuring Cross-Line-Office representation on the team. The Team Lead is responsible for ensuring there is participation from NOS, OAR, NMFS Regional Office, and NMFS Science Center (as well as NESDIS if appropriate) as part of the planning team to develop and implement the fieldwork.
3. Clarifying roles. The team should develop a roles and responsibilities document as part of their planning process. An [example](#) is available on the Data Portal.
4. Involving the relevant Fishery Management Council(s) in the planning of fieldwork and dissemination of results
5. Producing a three-year science plan. A [template](#) is available on the Data Portal as guidance.
6. Providing an annually updated budget and implementation plan. Guidance is available in appendix 2 of the three-year science plan template.

Be sure to refer to the Program's [Regional Fieldwork Selection and Planning Guidelines](#) on the Data Portal for more detailed descriptions of these requirements.

## Requirements for Annual Budget Execution

So that the DSCRTP can comply with NOAA's budget tracking and accountability requirements, we require that Field Team Leads overseeing the execution of DSCRTP funds:

1. Provide the DSCRTP HQ staff with the necessary information in order to prepare Budget Operating Plan (BOP) memos, including the break out of fieldwork funding amounts by office, the proper organization codes, principal investigators' and budget officers' contact information.
2. Coordinate the BOP with participating offices, so their budget officers may retrieve funds within two weeks of receiving notice that the transfers are complete.
3. Contact the DSCRTP as soon as possible, if funds cannot be obligated in accordance with the monthly spend plans, to explain variances.
4. Execute 100% funds during the same fiscal year and for DSCRTP purposes. If unable to obligate funds for original, planned purposes, please contact the DSCRTP HQ staff to discuss how to return or reprogram the funds.
5. Cannot use funds make major equipment purchases – i.e., the Program will not support purchases of ROVs, AUVs, or other equipment that will require storage or maintenance beyond the three-year research initiative.

6. In general, funds are not to be used for federal salaries. Please coordinate with the DSCRTP HQ Team on any specific exceptions that may be requested (e.g., overtime for ship operations, etc.).

#### Requirements Regarding Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting

NOAA has existing requirements for submission and archiving of specific data sets and associated metadata. All Field Team Leads must ensure these NOAA requirements are met, data are submitted to appropriate national archives (NODC, NCDDC, NCDC, NGDC, NOAA Central Library), and provide documentation of this submission to the Program's data manager, Robert McGuinn (Robert.McGunn@noaa.gov). In addition, the Program has developed a suite of data products, procedures, and deadlines that are required for the regional fieldwork. Please refer to the [Fieldwork Data Guidance folder](#) on the Data Portal.

#### Requirements for Reporting on Progress and Results

Because of the importance of communicating the impacts of Program investments, reporting progress and results of fieldwork efforts are coordinated by the Field Team Leads. The Field Team Leads will serve as the point of contact to DSCRTP HQ staff for:

1. Reporting progress at least every six months on NOAA's Deep Sea Coral Data Portal. (<https://deepseacoraldata.noaa.gov/fieldwork-studies>)
2. Ensuring that the DSCRTP HQ Team is informed of upcoming activities (e.g., cruises, presentations to Councils, etc.), and required documents (e.g., cruise plans, cruise reports, etc.) are submitted to the DSCRTP.
3. For activities that contribute to the DSCRTP performance measures and/or milestones in the NMFS Annual Operating Plan, annual targets, quarterly progress reports, and final performance reporting may be requested. This includes reporting on areas of seafloor mapped with multibeam and areas where surveys for deep-sea coral or sponge habitat have been conducted. For information on the Program's performance measures, see sections 3.07 and 3.08 of the [Office of Habitat Conservation's Performance Measure Business Rules](#).
4. Crediting the DSCRTP in all presentations, reports, and other publications on work that received financial support from the Program.
  - a. For Photos: Credit "NOAA" and any other credits you wish to provide (e.g., the photographer, project manager, or office). NOAA and the DSCRTP retain the right to use photos, videos or figures developed under program-funded activities.
5. Submitting copies of all reports and PDFs of publications to the DSCRTP, by uploading them to the Data Portal, and notifying the DSCRTP HQ staff.
6. Participating in NOAA's internal Deep-Sea Coral Coordination teleconference bimonthly, and present interim and final results when invited.
7. Submitting a final report and present results to the Fishery Management Council.